



October 21, 2021

Dear Community Partner,

It is wonderful to finally be able to share encouraging news again. We are cautiously optimistic that our latest surge in cases has at last peaked. In the last week, we've had 554 new COVID-19 cases (compared to 799 the previous week). This brings our total to 23,626 confirmed cases in St. Louis County since the start of the pandemic.

The discouraging news is that the number of people dying continues to increase. We've had 9 deaths reported in the last week (total 361). Likewise we are seeing no decrease in the number of COVID-related hospital admissions. [COVID-19 Dashboard \(stlouiscountymn.gov\)](https://stlouiscountymn.gov/covid-19-dashboard)

Another sobering perspective - our weekly case rate is still 300+ per 100,000 people, which is more than triple the rate the CDC defines as "high" transmission, and more than six times that rate at which wearing masks is recommended. So we still have a ways to go.

Other updates and resources:

- **New vaccine incentives:** The State of Minnesota launched "Kids Deserve a Shot", to encourage you ages 12-17 to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and build broader community protection. (Right now, only 50% of kids 12-15 and less than 60% of kids 16-17 are fully vaccinated, the lowest vaccination rates of all eligible age groups.) The program is two part. Any 12-17 year old who completes their vaccine series now through Nov. 30 can register to receive a \$200 Visa gift card. Meanwhile ANY 12-17 year old who is fully vaccinated can register for a chance to win one of five \$100,000 college scholarships. [Full details here.](#)
- **Testing:** The state is opening new sites offering rapid result COVID tests, and are adding this option at some existing saliva test sites (including the DECC). One of the new sites will be in Hibbing beginning next week, however the exact location and schedule hasn't been released yet. One important note about the rapid COVID tests – these are recommended for people already experiencing symptoms. People who do not have symptoms but want to be tested due to possible exposure or other reasons should use the more accurate PCR test.
- **Breakthrough cases:** Are you hearing questions (or wondering yourself) about how common it is to catch COVID-19 if fully vaccinated? The state just updated the data available regarding breakthrough cases. [COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Weekly Update - Minnesota Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://state.mn.us/covid-19-vaccine-breakthrough-weekly-update)

Thank you for all you continue to do! Please don't hesitate to reach out by phone or email if I can be of assistance to you.

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